

Confidential

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE IN THE INTEGRATION PROGRAM OF THE PHILADELPHIA
HOUSING AUTHORITY, OCTOBER 3, 1952

I. PREPARATORY PERIOD

Advisory Committee Consideration

An Advisory Committee on Community Relations was appointed by the Housing Authority following discussion with community groups early in 1951. Later during that year a Subcommittee on Tenant Selection and Occupancy was appointed by the Advisory Committee to review present policies of the Authority and to make recommendations. The Subcommittee submitted a detailed report after numerous meetings. After consideration, the Advisory Committee as a whole sent its recommendations for revisions in occupancy policy and achieving an integrated housing program to the Housing Authority on March 17, 1952.

The Authority requested a detailed statement of staff thinking which was presented to the Authority on March 24th. Several meetings, including special ones, were held in which there was consideration of the integration program. On May 26, 1952, the resolution was adopted by the Authority declaring that all projects would be operated without discrimination. On June 6, the Advisory Committee sent a letter to all cooperating organizations advising them of the new policy and asking their participation.

Communication Regarding the New Policy

A meeting was held in the Central Office for all Division Heads and Managers in which the policy for integrated occupancy was definitively outlined by the Executive Director. Following this meeting, the Executive Director, the Assistant to the Executive Director and the Director of Management attended staff meetings on every project at which the new policy was outlined as part of the basic program of the Authority to every member of each project staff. Immediately following the project meetings, a letter

was sent to every resident family stating the policy so that there could be no grounds for rumor or misunderstanding. At the same time, a news story was released to all daily and many weekly papers in this area, which was carried by most of them. The monthly newsletter of the Housing Authority, sent to many civic leaders and officials, also included the resolution regarding integration and a brief statement concerning it.

Project Orientation

Immediately following the announcement to residents and the public, a stream of telephone calls, letters and personal inquiries were addressed to personnel of the Authority and the managers in particular. How to handle these inquiries was the subject of each succeeding project staff meeting. Managers devoted much of their time toward positive orientation of residents on the policy. Small and large resident meetings were attended by managers to answer questions and to set a tone regarding the new policy, i.e., that it was in effect throughout the Housing Authority, that it was right, and that it would be carried out and that the Authority expected the cooperation of all residents.

Central Office Procedures

Robert Hazelwood was borrowed from the Fellowship Commission to work with the Director of Management on coordinating the transitional phase of the new policy. After some weeks of excellent work, he was employed on a permanent basis by the Authority as Management Program Expediter to assist the Director of Management in coordinating operations between the Application Office and projects. Negro applicants for previously white projects were interviewed by the Supervisor of Applications and by Robert Hazelwood to insure

their meeting qualifications and to make clear to them the possible problems in regard to the change of policy. A series of workshop sessions were held for managers and staff members most closely concerned with the integration program.

At every step of the way, full discussion was held with the Race Relations Adviser of the Public Housing Administration. New York and Washington offices were kept informed and their experience was made available to the Authority, together with procedures of other local Authorities, especially that of Newark, New Jersey, which had been carrying out an integrated program since 1950. Mrs. Eileen Simpkins Lett, Director of Tenant Selection for the Newark Housing Authority, met with the Managers and Tenant Selection staff of this Authority, and Miss Adeline Camarota, Supervisor of Tenant Selection here visited the Newark Authority to study procedures.

Meetings With Community Groups

On June 5, agencies which were felt to be especially concerned with the success of the new policy were invited to meet with the Housing Authority to consider all possible work to be done. Recommendations and assistance from these community groups were requested and they were informed that the Authority expected that qualified applicant Negro families would be moved into white projects within coming weeks. In attendance were representatives of the Commission on Human Relations, Fellowship Commission and the Health and Welfare Council. On June 12, a meeting was held, called by the Advisory Committee, to which were invited all organizations which had cooperated in establishing the Advisory Committee. About 50 organizations were represented. The integration policy was outlined by the Chairman and Executive Director of the Authority.

On June 18, a second meeting was held of executives and staff personnel of

the cooperating agencies to review what work had been done by them in the neighborhoods to prepare for the moving in of Negro families. Work done by these agencies varied from one to several days of contacting civic leaders in the neighborhoods. Reports were submitted to the Authority. The limited amount of work done appeared to result from other assignments to personnel, although all organizations had been informed of the imminence of the change in Authority policy early in 1952 by means of their participation in the Advisory Committee. On March 17, it had been recommended to the Commission on Human Relations that staff personnel be assigned to work with the Housing Authority on potential neighborhood problems. The Health and Welfare Council were asked to assign staff on June 12.

Discussions were also held with the Mayor's Information staff, the police, and other public and private agencies regarding the change in Authority policy.

II. INITIAL PHASE OF THE NEW POLICY

Arch Homes

The first project to be completed following the Housing Act of 1949, Arch Homes, was nearly ready for occupancy in May 1952. The bulk of applications were at that time from Negro families. In view of the desirability of demonstrating the integrated occupancy policy to the general public, the Advisory Committee strongly urged the Housing Authority to encourage white applications, and as a means of doing so, recommended on May 14 that the Housing Authority declare a non-discriminatory occupancy policy for all projects and to effectuate it at the earliest possible date. As a result of various informational activities, the number of white applicants for Arch Homes increased substantially so that complete occupancy was achieved during July, which included 40 Negro and 37 white families.

Problems of Initial Occupancy

Since the exact number and location of vacancies at any one time could not be predicted, the exact date for move-in could not be furnished to the police and community groups until the vacancy had occurred and a new family had seen the apartment, signed the lease, and given an exact date for moving in. After it became the policy to inform all applicants visiting the Application Office and many of those already in waiting that they were eligible for all projects (if the head of the family was a veteran and income requirements were met for the low-income projects), some time elapsed before applications were made by qualified families.

A considerable number of refusals then occurred on the part of families that had been declared eligible. It had been thought that Negro families would apply for and accept homes in Oxford Village, but three families turned down vacant apartments. Qualified applicants were not forthcoming for Northeast Village or Luzerne Homes. For the closer permanent projects, there were a number of applications made but even here, there were repeated turn-downs, as for instance, at Bartram Homes where two families declined occupancy. The third family which accepted after signing the lease found that they could not move in on the date expected, and even while rental payment began on a certain date, the family did not move in until two weeks later. Such uncertainties added to the complexity of this operation.

Contact With the Police Commission

Commissioner Thomas Gibbons was first contacted to discuss the entire program and to obtain his suggestions. Further discussions were held with Captain Howard Leary, Head of the Juvenile Aid Bureau. When exact dates for moving in the Negro families were finally known, the information was conveyed to the police. Commendation is deserved to the executives and their staffs

for an outstanding piece of work in handling all problems that arose and for complete and continued cooperation. The success of the operation, especially the aspect of preventing any serious incident, can be primarily credited to prompt and effective work by the police.

Moving In the First Families

A Negro family had been moved into Passyunk Homes early in 1952 at the request of the U.S. Navy, concerning which there was no difficulty other than a number of phone calls and discussion with the Manager. The first Negro family, an elderly couple, moved into Hill Creek Homes, a low-rent housing project, on July 21. No incident of any kind occurred and negative feeling seemed at a minimum. The family now appears well accepted in the project. The first family leased at Bartram Homes on August 9, but did not move in until near the end of the month. At several meetings residents discussed the matter and argued with the Manager, who had been invited to attend, but in a fairly orderly fashion. It is reported that feeling in that project now appears quite well stabilized in favor of law and order and acceptance of the Authority policy.

The first family moved into Abbottsford on August 6. Prior to this time, the Manager had spent much time on the project and in the office discussing the new policy with residents and had attended four meetings of resident organizations where the matter was also fully discussed. A large majority of adults were orderly in their behavior. A group of project leaders signed a letter to all residents asking for their cooperation in maintaining order. At a later date, it was felt to be advisable for the Housing Authority to issue a special letter to all residents stating that disturbance by any family would be grounds for eviction. On August 11, an incident began by teen-agers throwing

stones at plainclothesmen on duty, which together with noise attracted a large group. After some demonstration and milling around, largely by several dozen teen-agers, a restrained but effective show of force by the police caused the gradual dispersal of the audience.

Work of the Cooperating Organizations

Following the above incident at Abbotsford Project, valuable work was done by cooperating organizations in calling on the clergy, families in the project, reassurance to the first Negro family, and recommendations to the Housing Authority for further community work.

III. PLAN FOR CONTINUANCE DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Transition Period

The transition period for achieving a substantially integrated housing program will last for at least one and probably two years. During that time, careful attention will be given to details of family selection, location of homes and human relations work within and around projects.

Next Move-ins

Vacancies have been held during the last two weeks and not leased so that one Negro and several white families can be moved into Abbotsford, Bartram and Hill Creek projects. It was recommended that one Negro family be moved into each of the three projects on or about October 6 to 8. Since the first Negro family moved in, there have been nine white families moved into Abbotsford, nine white families into Bartram, and eleven white families into Hill Creek, so that it should be clear to residents that the transition will be gradual. Negro applications have not been received for Oxford Village, Luzerne Homes and

Northeast Village. The Passyunk project occupancy is controlled by the U.S. Navy. However, Captain Leary requested that only one family move in at a time in view of the actual and potentially even heavier demand on his personnel. It is now planned that only one family be moved into Abbotsford on October 8.

Police Protection

It is felt by the staff of the Housing Authority that the greatest demonstration of confidence will be made at this time by an absolute minimum of apparent police protection for the next move-ins. A plainclothesman should be assigned, who should keep in motion and not sit or stand constantly in front of the dwelling affected. It is felt that no official police cars should enter or stop in the project other than the usual checks. While strong police protection was clearly needed at one point at Abbotsford, and it is difficult to assess the exact results, both positive and negative, there has been considerable antagonism expressed by residents to the large quantity of police attention.

Staff Training

In continuation of previous manager meetings on day to day problems of integration, a workshop series of discussions is being held. Dr. Martin Chworowsky, Director of the Institute of Human Relations at the University of Pennsylvania, has agreed to work with the Authority in guiding such training sessions. Special attention is being given to further staff training on projects on how to handle questions, minor incidents and potential dangers, as well as good work with all residents alike.

Cooperating Organizations

A Committee to coordinate human relations work in and around housing

projects is functioning. Included are staff personnel from the cooperating organisations who will do actual work in neighborhoods, as well as make suggestions for means of communication and attitude formation regarding the city and Authority's policy for integrated housing.

All cooperating organizations will be notified as to the exact address and date of moving in of Negro families as soon as the decision has been reached. Suggestions and work by the cooperating organisations is welcomed by the Authority just as it has been during the four months since the new policy was announced. In addition to the problem of minimizing negative reactions and handling incidents during the preliminary phases, there is also the strong need for steady educational work in neighborhoods regarding the rightness, logic and good sense of the policy for integrated housing.

A weekly log of all actions and information regarding the integration program is being kept by the managers and Authority staff concerned. Copies are being sent to the cooperating organisations. A summary such as this one will be sent to the fifteen members of the Advisory Committee following the end of each month. The Advisory Committee is expected to consider with the Authority the long-term problems of serving the most serious housing needs of Philadelphia families in regard to present permanent projects, the removal of temporary veteran and war housing projects, the completion of the four projects now under construction, and the five approved for start of construction during fiscal 1952 - 53. Some of these are in practically all Negro areas, some in white neighborhoods, and some in fringe sections where there is now mixed occupancy. Each type of project presents special problems for achieving integrated occupancy. It is felt that the steady lessening of segregation is a basic part of long-term rise in housing standards, just as much as adequate maintenance of structures, sound financial administration and careful planning of livable new homes by the Housing Authority.